

Moving Beyond the Binary

Collaborating to embed Sustainable & Inclusive Gender Equality in the Irish HE

Sector
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Smile



Structure for Today's Presentation

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Introduction

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**Background &
Context to Inclusive
Gender Equality
Work in Ireland**

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**Moving Beyond the
Binary Collaborative
Project**

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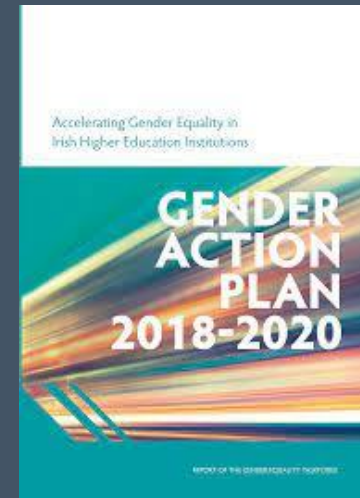
**Impact,
Transferability,
Sustainability &
Recommendations**

1. Introduction

- The missions of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are generally well known, with teaching, research and engagement being established pillars of activity.
- In recent years, attention has been given to what is now sometimes referred to as the fourth or indeed, the fifth mission of universities, which is where universities increasingly focus on addressing major social justice issues and challenges such as climate change, gender equality, racial inequity, gender-based violence etc.
- This paper outlines the innovative and highly collaborative cross-sector approach to embedding best practice in relation to gender identity and expression in Irish HEIs, and could, indeed, be categorised as an example of universities as activists in this space, working collaboratively to achieve the common good.

2. Background and Context to Inclusive Gender Equality Work in Irish HEIs

- Irish HE System – undergoing a period of significant change and system reconfiguration
- Focus at system level on Gender Equality
 - 2 National Reviews of Gender Equality in HE
 - Gender Equality Taskforce Report
 - National Centre of Excellence for EDI in the Irish HEA
 - Recommendations for HEI to implement including to develop EDI strategies that seek to effect change taking an intersectional approach.



3. Moving Beyond the Binary – Collaboration to Embed Inclusive Gender Identity, Expression & Diversity Training and Best Practice into Irish HEIs

- Research based on a project designed to tackle gender inequality in 5 partner Irish HEIs through development of a sustainable Gender Identity & Expression training programme for staff.
- 2 phase project, led by SETU, which began in 2020, which aims to:
 - Combat stereotyping and unconscious bias in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity minority groups, and invoking inclusion for the LGBTQ+ community.
 - Benefit stakeholders and other HEIs nationally by developing and sharing transferrable resources and best practice.



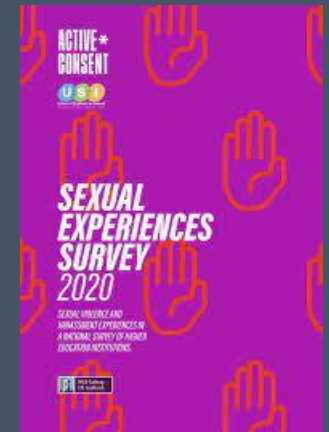
- Funded by the HEA's Gender Equality Enhancement Fund

Gender Diversity in Irish HEIs

Irish HEIs strive to be welcoming and supportive environments for a diverse staff and student body, with a variety of backgrounds and gender identities.

Primary research in this area is limited, but indicates that

- it is estimated that gender diverse people make up at least 1% of the population in Ireland = 2000 students minimum
- Minority groups, such as LGBTQ+ respondents, ethnic minorities and respondents with a disability were more likely to endure acts of bullying at work
- LGBTQI+ students have a particularly high level of exposure to sexual violence and harassment in our HEI's.



Collaboration with the Trans and Non-Binary Community via *ShoutOut*

- Recognising the need to ensure the lived experiences of the trans and non-binary community were central to the work, the partner HEIs invited ShoutOut, an Irish charity working to create inclusive services and educational institutions to join the partnership.
- This collaborative approach, both within the Irish HE sector, and cross-sector collaboration with Shout Out, was critical to the success of the project.



Project Methodology, Delivery & Feedback

Phase 1:

- Bespoke training programmes developed and piloted with 128 staff
- Feedback was gathered from each of the participants after each session and used to create an iterative process of updating and improving the training materials and methodologies.
- The ‘final’ training programme was then rolled out across the participating HEIs with 621 additional registrations

Group	Number	
	Registered 2021	Registered 2022
All	128	619
Academic & PMSS	81	514
HR	28	37
Leaders	19	68

Feedback from Participants Surveyed

Findings from wider roll out (n.230)

- Majority strongly agreed that the training was comprehensive (n.148), easy to understand (n.151), engaging (n.143) and interesting (n.170).

Training was	Comprehensive	Easy to understand	Engaging	Interesting
Strongly agree	148	151	143	170
Agree	76	69	78	53
Neutral	2	8	6	5
Disagree	3	1	1	1
Strongly Disagree	1	1	1	1

Qualitative Feedback

- *“I've done a lot of work on gender equality and it was refreshing to have a workshop that wasn't confined to the binary (I often joke that its extra hard to get academia/research to understand that gender is a spectrum when they have only recently discovered that women exist)”*
- *Delivery was excellent- it was a safe space & it also clarified terms ...this should be mandatory training for all staff.”*
- *“I'm gonna call myself a 'novice' to this area... I found I just got lost in it to be honest - so much terminology...coming out of it today I think id be even more afraid of tripping over myself and unintentionally saying something that would upset/offend someone, which is the last thing I would want to do.”*

Transferability & Sustainability

Phase 2 aimed to bring the project to scale and ensure its transferability and sustainability

The second round of funding allowed the partners to engage in a number of further distinct actions in this area including:

- Roll Out of Further Training – **Scale Up Impact**
- Train the Trainer Sessions - **Sustainability**
- Establishment of a National HE Gender Identity & Expression Champions Network - **Sustainability**
- Online Gender Identity & Expression Training Programme – **Transferability and Sustainability**

Impact

In addition to the training, national network and online programme development, the project acted as a catalyst for related initiatives in the HEI's including:

- increased use of staff's use of pronouns in their email signatures;
- staff support for LGBT+ & Allies networks
- development of gender identity and expression policies and procedures to support students and staff;
- staff engaging with and supporting LGBT+ related events
- support and implementation of name change practices for students and staff.



Opportunities & Challenges

Key opportunities which arose for the partners during the project included:

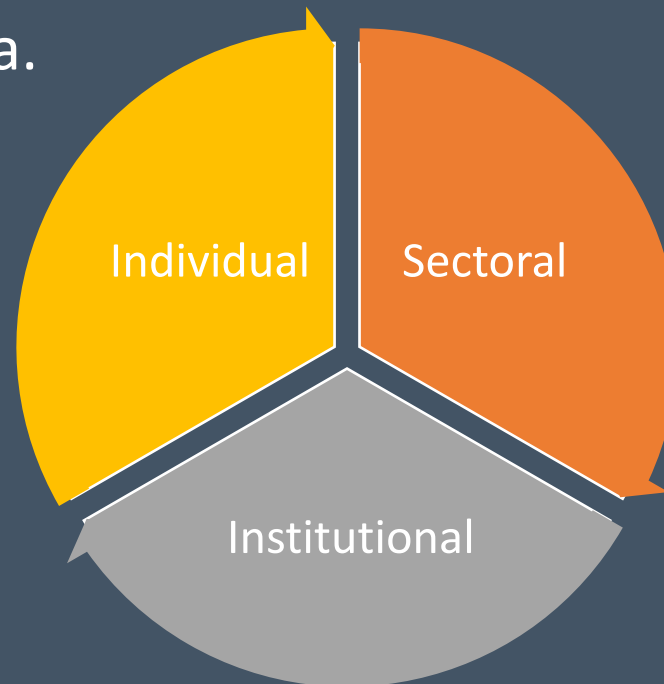
- Demonstrating inclusive leadership and support
- Empowering staff and students to be confident in their own knowledge and understanding of gender identity and expression.
- Value of collaborative approach meant that those undertaking work in this area had a support network and expertise upon which to build and grow work in this area.

Some Challenges too...

- Polarising societal or historic views – social justice trumps all?
- A reluctance to contribute for fear of saying something potentially inappropriate
- In some circumstances a perceived tension between academic freedom and dignity and respect for students and colleagues.

Recommendations for Sustainable Change & Transformation

- We have a responsibility towards all of our learners in HEIs, and a duty of care towards our students.
- On this basis of the findings from this project, we make the following recommendations as to how real and sustainable change can be embedded in this area.



System Level

- Further Investment
- Link to European Policy Instruments
- Further Research
- Data Capture
- Embed the Gender Diversity Champions Network

Institutional Level

- Visible Leadership & Commitment
- Continued support for Staff & Student LGBT+ Networks and Initiatives
- Gender inclusive policy and practice development
- Enhances training and awareness initiatives

Individual Level

- Own education and awareness
- Allyship

Conclusion

Project due to conclude by December 2023, but hopefully impacts will continue long after

Any Questions/Feedback?

Thank you for your time

Contact me: allison.Kenneally@setu.ie